Where sun rises and sets to the sound of ragas

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LUDHIANA: Bhaini Sahib -- a village around 25 kilometers away from Ludhiana -- has a historic and spiritual value, as it was here that Satguru Ram

Singh gave birth to the Namdhari Sikh Panth. However, the hidden connection with Indian classical music, and knowledge of all raagas makes this village more unique.

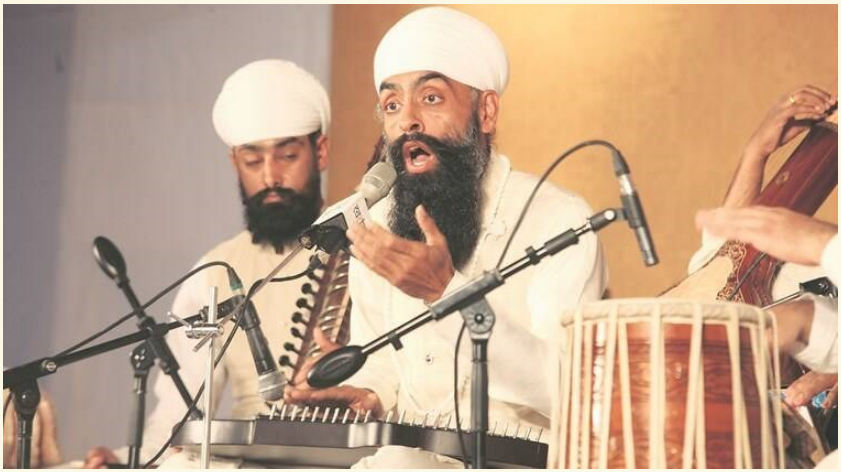
This is a village where one child of every house is an expert in raagas and Indian classical instrumental music. It is a ritual being followed in the village for decades. Every day after school, children of the village gather at Kala Kendra (music academy of the village run by the Namdhari sect) and learn music. Significantly, not just teenagers and youngsters of the village, but those from other villages and cities too are taught music free of cost in Bhaini Sahib.

Hazuri Ragi Balwant Singh Namdhari, an accomplished vocalist who also teaches at Bhaini Sahib, said: "Satguru Partap Singh started this tradition of teaching music to children and youth. From 1927-28 -- when he stablished the Namdhari Vidyalya -- he started Indian classical music training in it. After him, Satguru Jagjit Singh inherited his vision, and now Satguru Thakur Uday Singh is working on it passionately. Many children of Bhaini Sahib, nearby villages, and other cities come here to learn music. Moreover, youngsters who want to pursue their career in this field are sent outside Punjab for further training, and the

sect bears its expenses." Children, starting from the age of 5-6 years, start training in all 31 raagas, and Indian classical musical instruments like dilruba, sitar, flute, sarangi, israj, sarodh, santoor, tabla, and pakhavaj.

Further, Balwant Singh explained: "Satguru Pratap Singh was a strong believer in the power of music. He wanted the fragrance of music to touch every soul. He believed that music kept one away

from all negativity. Moreover, another objective of it was to stay people connected to Gurbani. Since Guru Granth Sahib is written and sung in raagas, so guruji wanted everyone to have a knowledge of raagas so that we can sing and understand our holy book."



Following the preaching of their head, now every child of this village gets up before sunrise and reaches the Kala Kendra for music training at 4am. Similarly in the evening too, after their school and sports practice, they get music training from 4-

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8pm. The greatest part of this tradition is that every child learns music without any compulsion, regardless of whether he wants to become a sportsperson, home-maker, farmer, or businessman.

Ratan Singh, an engineering student who learnt vocal music, said: "Although my profession will be engineering, I will never stay apart from music. I have been learning classical vocal since childhood. It is a part of my daily routine and the need of my soul."